ABSTRACT

An electronic commerce system allows trading partners to automatically configure a trading relationship for network-based business exchanges. The system has a first computer system at a first trading partner and a second computer system at a second trading partner. The computer systems are interconnected via a network, such as the Internet. The trading relationship governs how the trading partners' computer systems connect to one another and communicate over the network. The automated configuration process involves two phases. In a first phase, each of the trading partners enters all of its own configuration details and publishes that information to a URL (universal resource locator) at a Web site (hosted by the trading partner, or elsewhere). In a second phase, one of the trading partners attempts to forge a trading relationship with a potential trading partner by entering the URL for the potential trading partner's configuration details and pulling the details down from the Web site. The first trading partner then automatically creates and configures the trading relationship for online exchanges with the potential trading partner.